

The Mission and Opportunity of Lutheranism in the Present Religious Situation in this Country.

A Sermon

DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE GENERAL SYNOD
OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH,
AT SUNBURY, PA., MAY 22, 1907,

By the President,

REV. DAVID H. BAUSLIN, D. D.,

George D. Harter Professor of Historical and Practical Theology
in the Hamma Divinity School, Springfield, Ohio.

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FOREWORD.

It is not surprising that many requests have come to Dr. Bauslin for the publication of this sermon, which as President of the General Synod, he delivered at its opening, at Sunbury, Pa., May 22d, 1907. Although published in the church papers, it was felt that so able and thoughtful a sermon should be placed in more permanent and accessible form for those who desired to refer to it for instruction and inspiration as to the mission of the Lutheran church in these days of stress and subtle unbelief.

The sermon is timely, as it gives an estimate of the currents of religious thought and of the destructive philosophy and rationalism of the day that is based on careful observation and extensive reading and that is the outcome of well balanced judgment joined to keen insight as to their practical outcome. The word of warning is weighty and worthy of careful consideration. The positive statement of the doctrines that constitute the religion of Christ based upon the Scriptures and His own teaching is happily, if briefly, stated, calling men in these latitudinarian days back to the vital truths without which the Church has lost its mission and the gospel is shorn of its power.

The tribute he pays to the Lutheran church, whilst deserved, is inspiring, calling Lutherans to consider the glory of their church, which shines out in her clear statements of truth and in her faithful and consistent witness to the essential saving truths of the gospel of Christ.

As a wise Lutheran, Dr. Bauslin does not surrender the truths, founded upon the word of God, into which the Holy Spirit guided the Church in the past; but he also sees that these truths must be so applied as to meet the problems of

the present, and does not fear to claim that the Church, as a faithful householder, should bring forth treasures new as well as old. He is sanely conservative, but also open-minded towards new truths and new conditions.

His closing words are a clarion call to the Lutheran church to be faithful to maintain the integrity of her doctrines, to the different bodies into which the Lutheran church is divided, in this land, in these momentous days of conflict, to stand shoulder to shoulder against error and and for the faith, with charity one to another and in fraternal unity. He justly concludes that whilst we rejoice in a splendid heritage, we are not to settle into self-satisfaction, but find therein the call of Providence to move forward to even better and larger things than the fathers so gloriously bestowed upon us, the children of Luther. It is wise counsel that should be weighed and obeyed.

It is, therefore, well that this sermon, though written for fervid speech, should be published, for underneath its eloquent sentences are strong and timely thoughts, which are needed both for the stimulation and edification of the Lutherans of our land in these days of religious conflict.

CHARLES S. ALBERT.

The Mission and Opportunity of Lutheranism in the Present Religious Situation in this Country.

The Text.

That ye stand fast in one spirit, and with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel.—*Phil. i. 27.*

Contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.—*Jude 3.*

Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.—*Rev. iii. 1.*

FATHERS AND BRETHREN OF THE GENERAL SYNOD :

When we come together to consult for the welfare of that portion of the kingdom of God which is especially committed to our charge, it is well for us to endeavor to gird up the loins of our minds to meet the duties, whether of battle or endurance, which may be before us. To this end I think that in a time such as this, we might do well to consider some of the chief difficulties which the Church is called to face, neither refusing to recognize the existing dangers, nor on the other hand exaggerating them. It is better candidly and honestly to regard them with a brave and hopeful spirit, as men who are not going to be defeated by a craven terror of defeat. Every battle lost for Christ's sake is a battle won, even as Christ Himself crowned all the victories of all the ages by submitting to the ignominious defeat of the cross. But the conflicts of Christ's witnesses are not all defeats, and always to expect defeat is usually to be defeated. It becometh us in our day and place, as the servants of the Lord, to fairly and faithfully measure the tasks and difficulties that confront us.

True it is that the conflicts of the Church of to-day are not entirely new.

The battle in which we as faithful witnesses are to participate, has been ever since the Church was established, and yet the gates of hell have not triumphed. Millions may deny the faith, but the denial cannot destroy the faith so much as hasten their own destruction. Our faith in an age of unsettlement and conflict does not depend upon the authority of men. In that case we should to-day have cause for alarm, as we are compelled to contemplate accretions of error, distorted and disproportionate conceptions of the truth, the bias of narrow-mindedness, prejudice and superstition, all of which tend continually to disfigure and obscure the fundamental facts. Like the moss that has overgrown the fine old columns of some dismantled castle, these need to be cleared away, that the truth in its simplicity, power and beauty may be revealed.

If we are the teachers and confessors of a religion which is capable of perversion, it is also capable of constant rejuvenation and of progressive comprehension.

We shall, I hope, do ourselves a service, as well as the church we love, if for awhile we stop amid the "confused noise" of the conflicts of our time in the great sphere of religion, survey the field where so many are running to and fro, and direct our attention to the really essential points which are threatened, though not, as I believe, imperiled by the assault. Stormy years are ahead, say many who study the signs of the times, and see clearly that the Church is to witness an attack upon the fundamental Christian positions to which previous history furnishes no exact parallel. The question is, are we not now at one of the standing times? Have we not come to a crucial time in the religious conflicts when a more determined stand must be taken against disintegrating tendencies and destructive assaults upon our cherished faith? In an able address recently given, Mr. Robert E. Speer, able, spiritual and alert as to the religious movements of his time, said, "Against the great tendencies of the hour, we have got to take our stand." the tenden-

cies to which he particularly referred being determined attacks upon the supernatural, the authority of the Scriptures, the attempt to substitute religious values for historical facts and all the allied efforts of the destructive criticism.

In view, therefore, of the seriousness of the religious problems of our day, I ask you, my brethren, not only to fairly estimate the proportions of the dangers by which it is believed that the Christian religion is beset at this stage of the Church's unceasing conflict with error and irreligion, but also to some candid consideration of this theme, as appropriate to this time and place,—“The Mission and Opportunity of Lutheranism in the Present Religious Situation in this Country.”

That mission and opportunity, as it seems to me, are indicated in the selection of texts I have chosen, as *stability in unity*, as *earnestness of advocacy*, and *intelligent persistency*. Our mission and opportunity amid the currents and counter-currents of religious belief and disbelief is to “stand fast in one spirit with one soul striving for the faith of the gospel;” to “contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints,” and with the true and sane conservatism that has marked our history, “to hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

What now, let us inquire, is the religious situation in our country? The present condition of the Church is affected and determined, of course, largely by the present age. It is true indeed that the Church possesses, besides her own peculiar province, her own laws of development, and consequently her own history. These she shares with no other society, by whatever name it may be distinguished. True she treads her own path through the world's history, but she does not advance in entire independence of the age spirit. The present religious situation, accordingly, in its sources, is first of all, a reflection of the age through which we are passing: a spirit which as appealing to all sorts and conditions of men, has somehow become exceedingly popular in wide circles. Our times have been marked by much tangled conflict

of opinion, unsettlement of men's judgments upon a wide variety of subjects, and with attendant uncertainty and confusion of thought upon the greatest of all themes. Every domain has been invaded by revolutionary doctrines, beliefs and misbeliefs, and particularly with regard to the verities and claims of true religion. There is indeed scarcely any doctrine of religion whose reconstruction is not contended for with all the power of intellectual effort. This mental temper of the age has had much to do with fostering a bogus and heretical gospel, with the revamping of old, vanquished heresies, with a visible lowering of Christian standards, a certain vagueness in life and doctrine, together with a certain undesirable disingenuousness in the individual. We stand face to face not only with avowed indifference to religion, but with evils no less grave in consequence of the concessions of professed Christians, and indeed of entire communions, to the dominant spirit of the times and the reiterated efforts to meet the assaults of skepticism by surprising compromises.

Certain I am of this, that the intelligent thought of this age is occupied with Christianity as no other age was ever occupied with it. But by this I mean, of course, not the superficial thought indicated in much of the current magazine and newspaper discussion of Christian themes, but thought in its best sense, the considerate, veracious, earnest thought of the best minds of all civilized peoples. That is undoubtedly true at this hour. But in view of citations and declarations, that might be adduced, it would be difficult to overstate the seriousness of the crisis that is upon us. The questions involved in present day controversies go down to the roots of the Christian system, and beside them other contemporary issues are inconsiderable. Certainly there must be some ground between a bald literalism and a wild and uncontrolled liberalism; in other words, between a legitimate interpretation and a sort of interpretation which it is quite impossible for the unsophisticated mind to distinguish from blank denial. It has been alleged many times that the gospel in our day is menaced more from within

than from without; that the danger to be dreaded is not so much a successful propaganda of avowed and hostile unbelief, as a tacit abandonment of historical evangelical positions by Christians themselves; that among some bodies of Christians, whose orthodoxy and stability of character have heretofore commanded respectful admiration, there is now an ominous timidity in asserting the doctrines to which they are committed by their denominational standards; that in some churches a free handling of the Scriptures which but a few years ago would have been regarded as almost sacrilegious is now allowed to pass without rebuke and almost without notice; that for this cause the popular belief concerning the Bible has become much unsettled and that Christianity itself, or at least what has passed current as Christianity with many people, has been slipping away from the professed followers of the Lord. There are those who feel that very much of the religious thought in our country, as indicated in much of the contemporary theological discussion, is drifting, as Thomas DeQuincy would have said, down to the Botany Bay of the universe. Such are the admissions or accusations heard from every side. Much of the alarm is no doubt groundless, but there is enough, in all seriousness, to demand our prayerful and earnest attention, when, for example, institutions once strong citadels of faith have become fortresses of the enemy, and when many in places of influence are showing a fondness for changing the premises of the Christian religion with the varying impulses and hypotheses of astute professors at home and abroad. All this will be manifest from a fuller induction into the facts.

In one prominent church an influential leader speaks of "ominous tokens of a possible disruption." In the alleged interest of religion another declares that the time has come to frankly disavow the old time distinction between the Church and the world, and set up a theistic society into which "all people that on earth do dwell" may come with no questions asked save this, "Do you love goodness?" That would no doubt mean the elimination

from religion of a somewhat troublesome dualism, and we should no longer have to contemplate the scandal of bad men in the Church and good men out of it. But for one I cannot help fearing that this sort of comprehension would be secured at too great a cost and would mean the dropping out from human life of certain well approved factors, the presence of which in the Church have helped us on to where and what we are. A cosmopolitan religion that is simply theistic is much too general to be practicable and useful. It is too hazy and nebulous to have any message for mankind. It always at last comes to this, a religion founded upon God's specific revelation of Himself or a pure rationalism by which truth is attained in religion as it is in physics or any other realm of knowledge—these are the antitheses.

In our day three things occupy all serious minds: political science which is simply the divine law of well being; natural science, which includes the recorded observations of the laws of God in the physical world; and religious science or theology, which is the study of God and man in their several natures and in their reciprocal relations. Now the world has most unreasonably expected the Church to be always ready to reconcile the alleged facts and theories of science with the recorded facts of revelation, whether or not the facts alleged or the theories founded thereupon have been sufficiently verified. In recent years much of the current theology has been sadly warped by an attempt to twist it into harmony with one of these scientific hypotheses, viz., that of evolution. Hence miracles and the supernatural now have little value. But this attempt ought to be held in abeyance until a fresh supply of scientific certainties appears. Undoubtedly the old theology no longer reigns in certain quarters, but certainly no better fate awaits those who aim at reconstruction according to a science which is largely hypothetical. Finding themselves short of material in this region let us hope that some alleged theologians of the advanced order may at last be induced once more to betake themselves to the Bible. But in the meantime efforts are being made to place Christian-

ity in the category of mere evolution and thus to deprive the teaching of our Lord of its unique and transcendent value. It is now affirmed that this law holds good in both the natural and spiritual worlds; that the physical evolution of nature up to man is being followed by a spiritual evolution of man up to God; that the idea of life presented by Mahomet, by Buddha, by Plato, Marcus Aurelius and Goethe must be made to coalesce with the idea of life presented by Christ; that the test of Christianity as a universal religion lies in its power, not of dominating and supplanting these other religions but of being assimilated by them; that this process of assimilation is not to be brought about by preaching the distinctive doctrines of our holy religion, such as the incarnation, the resurrection and ascension of the Lord as facts upon which the whole of God's revelation to man depends, but by preaching the "spirit of Christ," by inculcating the "mind of Christ," by adjusting the gospel to the alleged better spirit of our age. In the application of this principle one has even gone so far as to declare that he has discovered proof of our Lord's lack of originality. Another finds the golden rule in Plato, others having found it Confucius and Tobit and Socrates, in Hillel, Philo and Seneca. Regardless such teachers are of the fact that Jesus republished this rule of life in its positive form, thus making the old truth new because it was endowed with His own power and authority; and the other fact that the golden rule is forever associated with the name of Christ, not because He alone uttered it, but because He alone enabled men even to wish to live it. He is original as the source of that recreative energy from which has emanated all the transformed life which has so marvelously differentiated our religion from paganism and to which may be traced practically all the recuperative, benevolent and progressive influences of our entire era.

So much insistence has been placed upon the "immanence of God" as to bring us dangerously near the borderland of bald pantheism and to make it easy for "uneasy and unstable souls" to espouse all sorts of pantheistic

vagaries, like mysticism, "theosophy," "Christian science," "the new thought" and other kindred emotional cults. There are indeed distinct indications in much of the religious teaching now having wide currency, of the confusion which enveloped antiquity and which befogs the heathen world. A Chicago paper commenting recently on some pulpit utterances, said that the world was not tired of the religion of Jesus Christ, but that it was tired of "man-made religions" and of preachers who profess to teach the Christian religion, but who really teach some so-called ethical hodge-podge, which is as much Buddhist as Christianity and as much pantheism as it is either. I refer to this because it shows that even the men of the secular press are somewhat awakened to the disastrous drift of things. It means that they are not deceived by plausible terms; that they know pantheism even when it comes wearing the veil of "divine immanence," and when religion is declared to have changed all its premises, they know that it is in danger of settling down on the old heathen foundations. They seem to know what it means when the Bible is classed with other sacred books, and when it is declared, to use Dr. Lyman Abbott's phrase, that the natural is supernatural and the supernatural is natural. They seem to be aware that the end of all this, if logically followed out, will be a religion of nature instead of a religion of revelation, a merely "man-made religion," with a jostling, screaming crowd of divinities up and down the whole realm of creation. They seem to be aware that much of the blunt assertion and assumption now current in many books, magazines, newspapers, and in some pulpits, is only a declaration of apostasy from the fundamentals of Christianity.

Particularly with regard to two primary doctrines is the new teaching much astray. They pertain to the person of Christ and the sacred Scriptures. The incarnation stands alone in history. It is not only God's own gracious answer to the hopes and yearnings of His erring children here on earth, but God's own eternal truth which far excels the fairest dreams of goodness men have ever dreamed; God's own transcendent gift of life eternal far

exceeding all that we could ever ask or think. Every conceivable perversion of this doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God was debated in the early history of the Church with such ability and ingenuity on the part of heresy that nothing was overlooked and the final settlement of the Catholic faith at Chalcedon in A. D. 451, settled some things. If the men who then framed the orthodox interpretation of the incarnation with such reverent caution, overlooked something connected with it, they certainly did not overlook the false doctrine of a spurious philosophy involved in the idea of a true incarnation of the Son of God without a supernatural conception and a virgin mother. From that early age Christ's pre-existence as the eternal *Logos*, and His birth of a virgin, through the power of the Holy Ghost, has been most assuredly confessed and taught by all people, who have constituted much of a factor in the world's redemption. Our Lord did much more than reveal the self-sacrificing love of God to mankind. He died in our stead. He is the propitiation for our sins. We are reconciled to God through Him. "Expiation," "substitution," "vicariousness," and "ransom,"—all these are words used in the entire history of the Church in attempts to explain the chief object of Christ's mission on earth. His death is not that simply of a martyr, but is the objective ground on which the sins of mankind are remitted and inward spiritual renewal made possible.

Our Lord's doctrine was no speculation. It was forceful and convincing and became real to others because it was terribly real to Himself. He was always positive about His own commission as the real Redeemer of men. He taught without any sort of ambiguity that He was "The way" to God; that the flesh which He should give for the life of the world was to be the world's bread. He preached His cross as a divine necessity and that His death was to be the foundation of a new kingdom and of future theologies. It is upon this kind of basis of truth that the Church must be kept, as the teacher of the truth and the administrator of the means of grace.

But our times have witnessed a strange declension

from these lofty conceptions. There is a widespread theology affirming itself to be advanced and which makes the claim of having practically rediscovered the genuine historical Jesus and of having reasserted in our day the real gospel. It has claimed that the Church has for nearly two thousand years forgotten what the Lord originally taught and proposed; that from the beginning of the apostolic age to the present time, the Christian Church has had one long line of misunderstandings and blunders; that the real message and nature of Jesus are now only being discovered. The teachers of the new view have the effrontery and irreverence to claim that they have given to the world a "new Jesus," and along with Him a new religion which will usher in the real Christian era in the long history of the evolution of religions. Our divine Lord and Saviour is now presented as a "great religious genius," who out of His own consciousness evolved ethical ideals that stand vastly higher than those of His own day. He is a model and example to the world, furnishing us with incentives and impulses to the higher life. Jesus is the greatest of all, not because He came down from heaven or because He was the Son of God, in any such sense as the Church has held and confessed, but because He was the greatest in religion, as other men have been greatest in war or government or philosophy or poetry. His teaching represented the highest point reached by the human race at His time, in its upward progress along religious lines. We hear much about the "mind of the Master" and the "teaching of Jesus." He is emphasized as an "interpreter" instead of an interpreter and Mediator. There is a widely prevalent theory that Jesus can be explained by the same principles used to explain other religious leaders; that like them He is a great interpreter of new truths about the unchanging spiritual world and the soul of man.

The endeavor is thus made to reduce the difference between Jesus and other teachers to one of mere degree and not to one of kind, to compass the fact of Christ within the lines of naturalistic development.

That God was in Christ is unmistakable in apostolic

teaching, and accordingly just now Paul is in serious disrepute with the modern reconstructionists of primitive Christianity. His theory of atonement, together with all that it presupposes and implies as to subjects of sin, the person and work of the Redeemer, are regarded as having been *added* by the apostle, and he is alleged thereby to have perverted the original teaching of the Lord.

Then, too, a strange and dangerous delusion has gained wide acceptance in many of the churches of Protestantism. It is now asserted with confidence, by even some who sit in Moses' seat, that a man may keep intact his faith in Christianity, while losing confidence in the literary documents in which the facts are stated. Men are urged to believe in the Lord from heaven while disbelieving almost everything which He is reported to have said or which is said about Him in the Bible. The record is invalidated while the content is retained.

This, my brethren, is the conclusion regarding the present religious situation in this country. The rationalism of the eighteenth century, confident and brilliant as it was, is surpassed for depth and strength and breadth of application by the negative thinking of our day. There is no use in shutting our eyes to the fact that a serious movement is on foot to formulate a non-miraculous Christianity. A supernatural Christianity means a Christianity that postulates God as related to the world and to religion in a certain manner. Here we battle against atheism, agnosticism, pantheism and evolutionistic naturalism in all its forms. Our religion, rightly apprehended, claims that that which is above nature is present in the world both as to power and essence, preserving and governing all things and calling all men unto God in a particular way. The supernatural being reveals himself in the Christian religion in a way different from that in any other religion. He brings a special revelation in Christianity to men for their salvation, so that we have an absolutely miraculous element in it, involving great truths, such as the incarnation of the Son of God, the supernatural life of word and deed of Jesus Christ, crowned after His death by His resurrection and

ascension, and finally the act of supernatural power, in the sinful heart, working through the means of grace, regenerating it and renewing it into the image of Christ.

But it has now become the fashion to ignore whatever is supernatural and reduce Christianity to a bald product of man's intellect, an ethical evolution in which the supernatural has no essential part. This Sadducean propaganda of rationalizing indicated its goal in the late Dean Stanley's famous question—"whether Unitarianism may not be described as Christianity freed from its absurdities?" Its present leaders are yet even more revolutionary. It is this opposition to the supernatural which is at the bottom of the radical criticism of the Old Testament. It proceeds upon the assumption that any unique inspiration of the Bible is, as many of its advocates arrogantly declare, "contrary to the consensus of sound scholarship," and as involving an extraordinary operation of the divine power. Its proposition is this, that nothing in the records of the past which attributes an event to a supernatural agency, or which contains supernatural elements can be accepted as historical. Of course this rules out much that is in the Old Testament, and will assuredly rule out much of the New Testament when its work is all in. It deals with hypotheses that involve desperate expedients and astonishing explanations, such, for example, as these,—that the tables of the covenant were probably meteoric stones, that the ark was the chest to hold this fetich of Israel, and this of a New England preacher, who, speaking in all seriousness, declared that the feeding of the five thousand was no miracle at all, that Christ only set an example of unselfishness when He offered to divide His frugal store with the multitude, and that, touched by His offer, the people brought forth their lunch baskets they were selfishly concealing and made a common stock for a basket picnic. It is a process that would reduce the Bible to such a ragged, tattered and torn condition that even some of the critics hesitate to follow their own logic to its conclusions, and are hence left in the air.

Now the propagandists of this anti-supernatural are polite. They claim to be scientific. They pose as cultured. They assure us that they take delight in the spiritual life. But the end of the crusade, my brethren, must be death to all that is vital in religion. In preaching it ends in a cold code of ethics, with a vague admixture of sentimentalism and much of philanthropic talk about brotherhood. In education it turns colleges and universities into schools of infidelity or refrigerators of religious indifference. In theology it makes man a center and ultimate achievement of all being. Instead of falling downward, he is moving upward. In religion this rationalistic atmosphere engenders no heat, no vision is obtained and no transfigurations can take place. If this desupernaturalized religion is true then the best thing to do in the interest of economy would be to close the doors of all the churches. The new gospel opens an easier road and a short cut to salvation and perfection. It presents a royal road to heaven, broad and beautiful, and not strait and narrow.

We are hearing much about faith being made to carry too heavy a burden, that it must unload, that if it will throw overboard one part, it can "cheerfully bear the other part." There are men in the pulpit who devote much of their homiletic skill to the work of throwing things overboard. They are bent on saving the ship by the process known in admiralty law as "jettisoning the cargo." A ship's crew jettisons the cargo when it throws overboard so much of it as may be necessary to lighten the craft and thereby save it from foundering. But those sailors who, under the stress of a panic, cast away the most valuable portion of the ship's contents, who throw overboard the chart, log-book and compass, instead of the ballast, though they may be acquitted of an evil conscience, they cannot be rightly credited with either coolness or discretion. It is futile to think of commending the faith by even whittling down the proportion of the miraculous. You may explain the manna as a freak of nature; you may say that Eutychus was only stunned by his fall from the attic window. But if you have left the

virgin birth, the resurrection and the ascension, what have you gained? Granting that some deny the faith, conceding that the Church is buffeted by adverse winds, the proposal to jettison those articles of the Church's faith which tell of the supernatural is not likely to help matters. If the church's hold on life in our generation can only be maintained by letting go or compromising those great affirmations which have given it its life and its victories, then in all seriousness, may men not ask, Is the Church worth saving?

Thus, my brethren, there is much in the present religious situation in our country that is indicative of unsettlement, uncertainty and unrest. They are neither new nor unusual conditions, only they press upon us in the problems of our own day. Not old foes with new faces, but with their old faces, and, judged aright, deserving to have the old names of earlier times attached, are many of the heresies of the day. But the sentiments and views I have thus attempted to outline, are to-day extensively prevalent all over our land, and are even seated in the heavenly places of the Church of God, though they are not of God, nor can they be said to be for God except in a merely subsidiary sense. As in the days of the fickle Galatians many men are quickly moved to the advocacy of another gospel. They are not averse to the espousal of such as is no gospel at all. Even in some cases they show a willingness to take up with the gospel of what a bright Englishman calls "the sixpenny rationalism of the railway book stall, the belated materialism which makes vice and virtue to be natural products like vitriol and sugar;" and what another, referring to the recent theological aberrations of the Rev. Reginald Campbell, has called a "Pinchbeck pantheism," and the "second-hand heterodoxies of the Holborn viaduct;" a gospel that is nine parts made up of platitudes and of which the remaining tenth is fallacy. It involves a tacit rejection of the Christian religion as a revelation of specific truth from God Himself. It substitutes for the real gospel nothing better than a mere subjective theory which every man can make or unmake at his own discre-

tion. The real question in the final analysis is this,—whether we have a religion of revelation which conveys to us the mind of God, or a merely human scheme that goes no further than the mind of man. In spite of all the pedantic twists and turns in the controversies of the day, the dividing line has become more and more obvious and is now plain enough to be seen even by unsophisticated men.

But passing on now to the second and more specific part of our subject,—What is the mission and opportunity of the church of our faith, in the present religious situation, as I have attempted to indicate what that situation is?

American history is in many respects unique. For the first time since the Church passed out from the freedom which its obscurity and weakness had given it, into the light and publicity, and under the yoke of the state in the fourth century, it has found in our country an opportunity on a large scale to develop its thought and to form its life under the unconstrained operation of its own inherent forces. In that opportunity Lutheranism shares.

He would be wholly ignorant of the religious situation, or incapable of accurately interpreting the signs of the times, who, in the ecstasy of a shallow Lutheran optimism, should imagine that the baneful influences in religion I have noted have left no sort of trace on the religious thought and feeling of some Lutherans. But the Christian faith exists not in single pious individuals, but has a corporate existence and expression as well. Christian doctrine does not remain a mere matter of individual conviction or expression, but is also set forth as the message and belief of the churches. This being true of faith in its individual and corporate expression, I advance to state a truth that I am sure any adequate induction into the religious situation in this country at this time warrants, viz., that at this hour and in this land no denomination of Christians in its position as a community of believers, stands so firmly and unequivocally upon the basis of evangelical truth and presents

such a positive, homogeneous and unbroken front to the radicalism and rationalism of the day as our own. We have our denominational shortcomings known to none as well as to ourselves. We have our stubborn racial proclivities, which at times and under stress, express themselves in not the most amiable type of the Christian life. They are begotten, in some measure, no doubt, by the memory of heroic struggles of rugged men who lived in very unamiable times and confronted very unamiable marplots against liberty, righteousness and the gospel. We have our own regretful divisions perpetuated, as it sometimes seems, at the expense of our efficiency in meeting the high responsibilities that are so manifestly placed upon us. But in this country, at this hour, Lutheranism, in all its branches, so far as the exhibition of its faith and life have a corporate expression, in all its varied organizations, missionary, philanthropic, and educational, in all its colleges and seminaries for the training of its youth, and in all its publications of merit and scholarship, in all the ministrations of its trained and qualified teachers and pastors, is confessing the old and tested truths, which have given it its name and history in the earth, and that unmodified by the negative tendencies and destructive heresies I have alluded to. Lutheranism in this country is yet of the belief that the new gospel is no gospel at all. It still, in all its manifold divisions, believes with the Lord's great apostle, that there is but one gospel and that there can be but one, and that the gospel of salvation by the faith of Jesus Christ, "even" as he adds, "as we believed on Christ Jesus that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Now there are as it seems to me historical reasons why Lutheranism in this country at this time is, so far as its corporate existence is concerned, practically uninfluenced by the negative and latitudinarian tendencies which are now working, I regret to say, deplorable results in some other communions. We have had our experience with the earlier rationalism when the deism of England

and the materialism of France invaded Germany and found the soil of the fatherland more than half prepared, in consequence of the prevalence of a philosophy which asserted that "what could not be demonstrated could not be believed." There linger with us as with no other people the memories of down-grade tendencies which invaded the once Pietistic University at Halle, and of teachers who claimed that a man could be a good Lutheran and at the same time assail the cherished beliefs of the Church; memories of how that these destructive tendencies were transplanted to this country in the days immediately succeeding the wise and heroic Muhlenberg, causing in our earlier history a period of deplorable deterioration from the pronounced and sound Lutheranism of former days, and of indifferentism to what had made Luther, Spener and Francke great as reformer, preacher and philanthropist. There linger with us the memories of how that this depressing rationalistic spirit was so prevalent in the older and larger bodies uniting with this General Synod in 1820 that it was found impossible to place in the Constitution of this body at that time even the name of the Augsburg Confession, the one ecumenical symbol of our Lutheran faith. Yes, we have had our experience with rationalism and a down-grade species of theologizing, with decimating religious theories and forces during the prevalence of the older rationalism extending from 1750 to 1823; and who shall say that our history, and our emergence at last with our faith intact, from the blighting influences and deteriorating infection of those negative tendencies have not the better qualified us to bear our testimony in such a time as this? Who shall affirm that our gratifying growth during the past decade has not come at exactly the right time in the religious history of our country?

Reverting, therefore, to the passages of Scripture selected for the text, this, my brethren, I take it to be the mission and opportunity of Lutheranism in the present religious situation in this country, to stand fast in one spirit and with one soul to continue to bear unbroken testimony to the stiffly evangelical position of our

church; to contend for a faith that is of apostolic transmission and that is rooted in the past; and to hold fast that which has been manifestly approved of God in our history as a people and so amply attested as the power of God unto salvation. It is our great privilege and our unmistakable opportunity to hold fast that which is good, to contend for a precious possession and to adhere to that which has been approved. Our mission here and now, withholding nothing and exaggerating nothing, and speaking the language of the time and place where Providence has placed us, is to re-assert in this our own beloved land the principles which made the Reformation possible and which have been transmitted to us in their integrity approved of God and still adhered to by millions of our fellow-men. Lutheranism that is self consistent, without bigotry, appreciates the undoubted fact that there are many sincere followers of the Lord whose theological and ecclesiastical views are not her own; she rejoices that other branches of Protestantism are bringing men to a saving knowledge of the truth, but in the passing years and changes, it has not yet found cause to change the terms which it has always used in religion, or to slacken the emphasis of its convictions regarding Christian truth.

In the midst of the religious situation marked by much mental chaos, our beloved church still, without ambiguity or evasion, confesses and holds fast to certain great truths. We begin, like the Bible, with God. In no vague and pantheistic sense, but as a personal self-conscious being, do we still affirm our faith. Without conscious intelligence, a personal will, a designed purpose, we have nothing—nothing but time and space, words and air; matter without mind, change without reason, confusion without end. We are out on a waste and wild sea with no shore possible to us forever. That we still believe and affirm. God manifest in the flesh; the Christ of history and of experience, expressing God to us and representing us to God. We still stand by the old truth which is ever new and eternally fundamental, that the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. We behold His

glory who is the "only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Holding to clear and adequate views as to who the Lord is, you settle every other question—miraculous birth, miraculous work, imperial claim to world empire, power to mediate between the world and God, power to control the destinies of men. That, we still affirm and believe. The work of Christ for our redemption,—certain it is that if He does not substitute Himself in one way for sinful men, He must in another. In some way the saving help must pass from Him to them. On this central theme we still do say, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto us and we unto the world." We still believe in God coming into this world only by His Son; in God saving this world only by His own Son's death and making men righteous by means of His death. This great fact must be kept free, by some body of Christians, from a mere theory of humanitarian mitigation, if salvation is to be anything more than education and knowledge. And all this we still gladly believe and confess.

Then comes faith in the work of Christ, simple, thankful, penitent, confiding trust, with all its gracious fruits of pardon, justification and acceptance into the filial relation. Then all the virtues of the new life; the putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of self and the service of mankind. Then the means of grace, the word communicated of God and sacraments not denuded of all meaning and efficacy; not simply means of our approach to God but of God's approach to us. All these things we still believe and maintain in their consistency and efficiency.

After our Lord's baptism He came "preaching the kingdom of God," and what did He preach? Universal repentance because of universal sin. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" "except a man be born again—born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God; the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost, came as God's free gift, because God so loved the world; came to give His life a ransom for

many ; and whosoever believeth on Him shall have eternal life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." In other words, He declares the facts of universal sinfulness and ruin, the ransom or rescue wrought by the sacrifice of Himself, salvation only through faith, the gift of God's grace, and awards for saint and sinner alike everlasting. These great truths of the gospel, my brethren, which all Lutherans everywhere still confess in their integrity, have an antique ring, 'tis true, but they ring on forever. They have definiteness and endurance.

There is no church big enough for two creeds on such vital truths. Serious divergence of opinion regarding them must be divisive and engender both heresy and weakness. The surrender of any one of these fundamental evangelical facts is the surrender of the citadel. The Founder of Christianity had much to say about getting His disciples down upon rock-bottom, and they themselves believed that they were somehow building upon "the chief corner-stone," and that the element of permanency was one of the most valuable assets of their faith. I would make no attack upon freedom of inquiry, but to afford hospitality to everything that comes along in the name of religion because it is advocated by personally unobjectionable and cultivated gentlemen, is no credit either to the intelligence of the head or the goodness of the heart. The historical evils of credulity are enormous, and when freedom and criticism degenerate into iconoclasm, truth is likely to get put down as well as error, and some sophisticated Barabbas gets thrust upon us instead of the Lord from heaven.

There is in our day a cant of liberalism as wearisome as the old war-cries of intolerance in the days when the grim Puritan snatched the prayer-book from the hands of the churchman and when the stiff churchman in his turn compelled the Puritan to read it against his will. "We have not only given up burning men for their opinions," said the witty Irish bishop Magee on one occasion, "but we have also given up thinking there are any opinions worth burning or being burned for."

The times make it vital, my brethren, that we learn this, that the true and real gospel is not an indefinable something to be variously interpreted in accordance with every man's theological whimwhams and as something that possesses no powers of consistent endurance from generation to generation. The accent of certainty again needs to be heard. Affirmations are demanded instead of languid acquiescence. Men must think together if they are long to act together. Fellowship in doctrine is the only enduring bond of fellowship in service. Lutheranism, as I have indicated, has its delinquencies, but still it cherishes some sturdy beliefs about the things that cannot be shaken. It holds fast to that which is old and good, and which cannot with safety be surrendered, and thinks that much of the new is bad, and must accordingly be resisted. It is opposed to cutting loose from the past on the assumption that we are so wholly modern that nothing old applies to us. It still believes that man is the same old sinner that man has always been; that he covets and lies and steals and kills, that he breaks his vows, runs away, plays the hypocrite and pretender, that he still does all the mean and wicked and shameful things that ever have been done; that if he has used the arts and advantages of our civilization to be more sly and effective, he is yet the same old sinner, that the same temptations catch him as of old, with their seduction and destruction; and that if he is to be made permanently better it must be by some power for righteousness working from outside himself, and as the result of what is done for him and on him instead of what he can do himself. We as a people still believe in the supernatural, that God has made Himself known to us in a divine revelation in the Scriptures, the writers of which were assuredly inspired by the Holy Ghost. Reading that Bible in the light of all that history teaches us, in the light of all that real science teaches us, in the light all that a true philosophy teaches us, in the light of all that a legitimate and authenticated criticism teaches us, we still believe in it as a book given of God. That we believe so tremendously that we will not allow the Bible to be

classified with other books of any order. We still believe in a supernatural and not an evolved Christ, and in giving Him a place separate and apart from all other men, and still gladly confessing that He is the Son of God, differing from the best of men not in degree only, but in kind, constituting the one living and personal and eternal bond of connection between the human race and its God. We still believe in sacraments from which all that is supernatural has not been eliminated, sacraments that are real channels of divine grace applying to men the promise of the gospel concerning the forgiveness of sins, offering through earthly elements the pledge of a grace that is assuredly present. We reject a devitalized Bible, a merely human Saviour, and a redemptive system out of which everything that is really redemptive has been removed. We hope for no moral inspirations to come from theological chaos, and from pulpits that are hesitant and apologetic; from seminary chairs and pulpits made weak not by too much dogmatism, but from the lack of the positive note and the authoritative accent born of great convictions about permanently great truths.

My reason, fathers and brothers, for choosing the subject of this evening, is my own profound interest in it, and also from the feeling that we need possibly to be stirred out of our characteristic disposition to keep somewhat in the religious background, and moved out of our slowness, lest we leave unstated great facts that have in them arousing and world-saving power. Speaking as a man who values every church that really bows before God in Christ, but who at the same time longs to have the great Church which he himself espouses with a full allegiance and affection, advance to a new and larger usefulness, let me say that it behooves us as Lutherans, in a time smitten by religious indefiniteness, more than ever to guard well our treasures. This, I take it, will not best be done by the process of segregation, and shutting our ears to the din of battle that is going on beyond the borders of our own Israel. Nor will it be done by settling down into a self-satisfied, self-complacent assurance that we have the citadel and the firing from our secure denom-

inational ramparts of an occasional shot at the enemy without. If what others than Lutherans are saying is true, then it would seem that the hour for Lutheranism has come in this country.

One of the latest of the many biographies of Luther is that of Prof. John Louis Nielsen, of the Methodist Episcopal theological school at Berea, in my own State of Ohio. In that book, the author says in his fine estimate of the great reformer's influence, "Luther's theology has exerted a great and lasting influence, and is still dominating a great portion of Christendom. This Luther's theology may yet serve as a guide-post in finding a way out of the present day difficulties."

If this be true, then, at this hour, speaking with all due humility and consideration, there is nothing that would help our country more religiously than a strong infusion of genuine Lutheranism, to counteract the influences of a Christianity that is made very attractive by the deification of humanity, the promise of salvation by education and character, and the reduction of sin to a phantom and the release of the soul from any authority but its own. And this that I have been saying in a homiletic sort of way the honored President of our country has been saying from a statesman's viewpoint. This is why we object, in a time like this, to changing the premises of our religion. Neither on the earth nor under the earth, nor in a Chicago or German university, has any other gospel ever been discovered, which has gone to the sinful heart of man with such a converting power, as that which the great apostle preached, the gospel for which we still stand, still contend, and still hold fast. Under Paul it shook down heathen temples, and when Luther disentangled it from a gospel of works proclaimed by a priesthood, whose works could not save, and took the Epistle to the Galatians for his "little Bible," he shook the world loose from the grasp of an awful ecclesiastical tyranny and inaugurated the modern period of free institutions and free salvation. Real beliefs, sturdily maintained, then kindled the heart and soul. They will do the same now and preserve our people from being swamped in the

bog of indeterminate thinking. They will cause the Church to be clothed with strength, accepted in the beloved, justified in Christ Jesus, and so made secure against all adversaries, secure against all evil and adorned with all the graces of the Spirit.

There is only one divine pathway for the Church. Movement along that line may not be so rapid or dazzling, but it is the movement of safety and salvation. Mr. Hawthorne, in his fine allegory, "The Celestial Railway" represents the movement of worldly religion as that of a railway train. There are the well laid track and elegant coaches. Over the smoothly graded way, laid where once were the "Slough of Despond," and the "Hill Difficulty," and the Valleys of "Humiliation" and the "Shadow of Death," and the dark river, the swift, luxurious train glides as on a holiday excursion. But up a steep pathway go two way-worn pilgrims afoot. They clamber along the dusty way in strange dress, and with quaint wallet and staff, and as the elegant train sweeps by them the passengers scan them through their field glasses. Mr. Worldly Wiseman smiles and nods and rallies them with a polite sarcasm, and the engineer, whom the author with grim humor represents as Apollyon, turns on them a well aimed jet of hissing steam. But Mr. Hawthorne reminds us that these uncouth foot passengers—our old friends, Christian and Faithful—are, after all, on the main line, and that the gay, thundering train was, after all, on the wrong line.

Let us be on the right line, fathers and brethren, though there be only two of us, or though like Enoch, we are alone but walking with God. It is the line of God the everlasting Father, and of His Son, and of the Holy Spirit—the line of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors and reformers—the line of the men who have carried the gospel over this wide land and into the ends of the earth.

Now there are some things essential, if in the largest and truest sense Lutheranism is to embrace its opportunity and fulfill its great mission in this land.

I. Permit me, out of your abundant goodness to say,

that if Lutheranism shall make progress in this new century and not become a spent cartridge; if, with unflinching courage and unfaltering faith, she shall go forth to meet the Philistines and Amalekites of our day, her faith must be maintained in its integrity. She must not go limping into the conflict weakened by modifications and compromises. She must remain, with a wise adaptation to our day and our tasks, essentially the same apprehension of the gospel of to-day and yesterday. Herein is the secret of her strength. Let us be open-minded and charitable to all scholarship of the sanest type; alert in all social progress and in the practicable application of Christian principles to the problems of labor and capital, to the government of cities, to the welfare of state and nation, but let us hold fast to that type of faith and religious life which puts the emphasis first on the redemption of man and on the agencies which are intended to enrich and foster man's spiritual life. Let us beware that we do not smother the best that is in our Lutheranism as a factor in our country's evangelization, even as Tarpeia, in the legend, was smothered under the golden shields of the Sabine soldiers.

The able president of the Baptist Seminary at Rochester, New York, has recently been sounding this ominous note: "We seem upon the verge of a second Unitarian defection, that will break up churches and compel secessions in a worse manner than did that of Channing and Ware a century ago." A study of the history of that movement affords no encouragement for success by the method of a modified system of compromises and an amended evangelicalism.

That movement, you may remember, formulated no creeds. It advocated absolute liberty of thought, and left the sphere of faith open to the will of every individual. It rejected all the characteristic features of evangelicalism. The movement was declared by many of the most accomplished men of the period to have inaugurated an era of spiritual emancipation. They had reformed the Reformation. There was a declaration of war on an impossible Trinity, an imaginary regeneration, an unneces-

sary atonement, and a superfluous redemption. The movement was inaugurated by the sentiment and rhetoric of so great a man as Channing. But what came of this new reformation? It did not reform at all either saints or sinners, and had no likeness whatever to the work of Luther in an earlier century. Everywhere throughout this land the churches which kept the faith of Paul and Luther increased and multiplied. The new reformation from the very beginning was useless spiritual quackery. Taking from the Bible its inspiration, throwing the miracles in the waste basket, the enthronement of human nature, removing the offense of the cross and the peril of unbelief, the making of all things sweet and lovely—this was a program that was thought to be irresistible in its attraction for the people who had groaned for so long under the direful burdens of evangelical religion. But the whole movement was a dreary failure and a vain expectation. If history has any message for us, my brethren, it is this, to teach us to hold on to our faith in the old doctrine of an inspired Bible, in the old ideas of the fall and redemption, the old warnings of judgment and condemnation, the old necessity for faith and regeneration; and the wisdom of God as superior to reason as a source of authority in the greatest concerns of life.

2. But again, suffer me to say, that to fulfill our mission and embrace our opportunity Lutheranism needs to close up its ranks some. Each church of Christ is certainly the best church for its own members and for its own work. But in consequence of the prejudice and insubordination of partially sanctified human nature it may not be rendering as effective service as it might under more favorable conditions. If, as religious movements in this country now seem to indicate, we are moving toward a mighty conflict within the fold of Protestantism itself, for the very principles which gave it life from the beginning, and if in this battle, as our present position seems to indicate, our church is destined to form a bulwark of Biblical truth and teaching, is it not deplorable that we cannot present something of an unbroken front, that we cannot front to the foe in solid phalanx, holding fast that which we have found good and effective, and

contend, defensively and offensively, for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. In a real unity of the faith I am persuaded that there is among us to-day more of an adherence to the form of sound words than now characterizes any other body of Christians in the land. The unity of Lutheranism never is or can be that of a sand heap, nor even of a work of art, but that of a living organism animated, after all, by the same sap from the roots to the remotest twig on the farthest limb. But while there is, as I take it, among Lutherans much unity in the faith we are yet sadly separated because of divisive tendencies known to you all. I am no dreamer about any hurried and forced organic unity. But the fact that we are charged with a solemn responsibility makes it all the more necessary for the cause of truth we hold as important for the world to know, and all the more rational that we forget our ancient battle-fields, allay our prejudices and foster that charity which becometh Christian men. I ask, in all seriousness, when the citadel of our faith is beleaguered and the enemy is casting trenches about the old fundamental strongholds, whether this is any time for Lutherans to be spending any part of their strength in hewing and girding at each other? This is no time for Lutherans to be quibbling in a pedantic fashion over the mint, anise and cummin of confessional questions, and for keeping apart the one from the other over problems that belong to the inscrutable counsels of the Almighty and fostering harmful competitions in the same general religious estate.

At the Presbyterian Brotherhood in Indianapolis, some months ago, the loyal sons of that great church were roused to great enthusiasm by the strong and inspirational speech of a Canadian member. His note to the sons and brothers of his great communion was sounded out in the ancient Gaelic clarion call, "Sons of the Gael, shoulders together!" Sons of the men who stood with Luther in the stormy days when our history began at Wittenberg, Worms and Augsburg; sons of the men who followed Gustavus Adolphus, "the Lion of the North," the hero of the great struggle which preserved to our fathers the heritage of their faith; sons of the men

who were taught in the school of Spener, the indefatigable pastor and preacher, and of Francke, the scholar and philanthropist; sons of men who were the contemporaries of Muhlenberg, organizer, preacher and missionary—we, too, have an inspirational history and church ancestry. We, too, should get our shoulders and our hearts together for the coming battle. We need an end of strife, the delightful silence after battle, an end of the antagonisms which only bad men applaud. "Lose no opportunity," said John Wesley in his day, "in declaring to all men that the Methodists are one people in all the world." Let us lose no time to-day in letting this country know that, at least upon the great issues to which I have alluded, all Lutherans here, and everywhere in all this land, notwithstanding our sometime uncharitable judgments of one another, are one in a common faith that is as yet untouched by the cold hand of negation and rationalism.

And you will permit me, my brethren, to say that this body of ours, this beloved General Synod, from its position, its age, and the principles and purposes announced at its organization, is best adapted to set the example in this work of unifying our forces. It may not be in our power to effect unions, but we can keep our door open, we can keep our organization in condition to invite the others and let them know that we desire that which will better adapt us to meet the responsibilities of our larger time. We can foster the spirit of the fathers, who in their day even, longed for better things. Let me adduce here the testimony of two of them, both able and widely useful and influential in their day, and men who served this body in all fidelity. Just thirty years ago in the Diet of 1877, Dr. F. W. Conrad said: "To see her divisions healed, her scattered forces united and her mighty energies concentrated in the prosecution of her great mission in this western world—this has been the ecclesiastical idol of my life." In the same meeting the late Dr. J. A. Brown said this: "If any are ambitious to see the divisions of the Lutheran church perpetuated, to see her strength frittered away in feeble and unpromising efforts, to see one part of the Church arrayed against

another, whilst the hosts of darkness present a united front against our advance; if they are satisfied to live and die, having achieved the glory of keeping alive controversies which centuries of debate and strife have done little or nothing to settle, let them make their own choice. I envy them not their following or their glory." Is there a man in this body who would sound a discordant note from that of these effective and honored leaders among us in the days when divisive forces were at work among us as they are not to-day? In our day we need to be watchful that individualism and provincialism are not magnified so that we be in danger of sacrificing our effectiveness in the conflict for that which is fundamental to Protestantism.

3. But once more, if we are to fulfill our mission and embrace our opportunities, we must appreciate our own day and place. Our present day Lutheranism in this country is no outcast from the inheritance of a rich and glorious past. We are not separate from Lutheran history; from the love and communion of our fathers in the faith; from its martyrs and confessors; from its holy men and saintly women; from its hymns of adoration and praise, its conflicts and triumphs, its lofty and eternal truths settled long ago. But splendid and inspiring as Lutheranism has been in the past, our church cannot live and thrive and fulfill its God-appointed mission by magnifying and extolling that which is past. We are not to settle down into self-satisfaction over the deeds of the fathers. We are conservative, but we must be progressive. Each age has its own theological work to do. The sixteenth century could not pronounce all that Lutheranism has to say to this world. As one of the best accredited scholars and teachers of our church and day in this country has said: "The Church of every age and every land has a peculiar service in the development of the kingdom of God to perform."—*Henry E. Jacobs*. We must deliver our message in the time and place where Providence has called us. The backward look may become a means of tarrying that results in paralysis. Lutheranism, to justify itself as worthy of to-day, must

answer to-day's needs. We honor the fathers; but we are here and now in our own time and place. The iron of the fathers may be in us. Let us hope that it is. But it is of but little worth if it do not brace us for the new day and the new duties. The beauty of the fathers may be upon us. Let us so hope. But unless it move us to better and larger things for the kingdom of God, the world will be made no richer. Into our fold we may honestly and eagerly ask others to come, not because of what our fathers did, but because of what we propose to do. I have noticed in our harbors that the guns for defence always point the way the enemy would probably come. The Church's battle in our time, as in every time, has its own peculiarity. New approaches demand new defences. "In their own day shall the Lord of hosts be for strength to them that turn the battle."

Fathers and brethren, we are at the gateway of a new century. Behind us are the years of our fathers; around us is the heritage they have given us; before us is the land yet to be possessed. We regard with gratitude to God the heritage of our church. We thank Him for its beginning, its progress and its hopeful present. We praise Him for the faith of our fathers, for the truth they guarded and have handed to us; for the lives they lived and for their steadfast and heroic labors. We accept reverently the responsibilities of our place, and pray the God of our fathers to make us worthy to enter into their labors and to push forward in our time the Church they loved and planted in the days of privation and discouragement.

It may be that the times are full of danger. It may be that the yeasty condition of human society for the time affects the Church; that the poor and the rich are not at ease with one another; that the material and physical gratification of the day are alluring; that the pride of intellectualism is deadening; and that the echo of the Lord's voice comes back from many a ministry. "We have piped unto you and you have not danced, we have mourned unto you and you have not lamented." But when have the times not been out of joint? Never in the

past has man felt the need of true peace of heart more than to-day, never has there been an open door of spiritual effort more inviting than to-day. Contrast the aspect of this decade of this century with that which faced the Church in this country in the years immediately preceding the organization of this body. The dew of youth was then on the missionary enterprise. The Church did then indeed "face a frowning world." It was the heyday of cheap and boastful infidelity. The horizon was blazing with the camp-fires of the Church's enemies. The air rang with predictions of the speedy disappearance of Christianity from the earth. In that day Thomas Paine, who, as one has truly said, resembled "a mouse nibbling at the plumage of an archangel," was picking flaws in the Bible and heralding the dawn of "the age of reason." Hume not many years before had been expending the strength of his rare intellect in a futile effort to demonstrate the impossibility of the miraculous, and Gibbon had been using his richly furnished brain in an effort to explain the triumphs of Christianity without divine assistance. Voltaire had been snarling out his contempt for religion and snickering at everything that has brought help or hope to a bad world. That era in general has been called "the Pentecost of unbelief." It was a millennium of infidelity which proved to be a veritable festival of the abomination of desolation. The times are full of perils, I admit, but the situation is as much changed from that which faced our fathers as though the machinery of the planet had been reversed and the globe were revolving the other way. The note of victory ought to be in all our growing ranks and the shout of triumph on our lips. Could that little band of faithful men, who organized this General Synod less than one hundred years ago, look in upon our convention to-day, representing as we do a great church, well equipped for the work which it is called to do, in regions which, at the time of their assembling, were an unbroken wilderness—if they could have foreseen that they were organizing for a church, which in less than one hundred years would cover a territory more than double the size of the Roman

empire when it was said to rule the world, how impressive and eventful would the work have seemed to be, which in humility and wisdom, they were then assembled to do. What if they could have foreseen that to-day all over this continent there stand side by side the Lutheran and the Romanist, for example, the teacher face to face with the priest, the open Bible confronting the confessional, liberty opposing tyranny, the obedience of Christ resisting the obedience of Rome?

We have entered, men of my own age and younger brethren, into their labors. But we are here and now. And accordingly a very solemn responsibility rests upon this meeting which is assembled to carry on the work which they so well inaugurated. While we must always be true to the doctrines and spirit of our one only God and Saviour and to every usage and doctrine which is essential to the integrity of our beloved church, we should carefully consider the circumstances which surround us and conform ourselves to the peculiar condition and necessities of the people among whom we live, meeting, as best we may, with our own particular apprehension of the gospel, the wants of our heterogeneous and shifting community. While we continue to walk in the old paths, let it be with an accelerated pace and with eyes looking forward and not backward.

May the grace of God so abide in and be manifested through our great communion, that it shall become increasingly a source of genuine spiritual blessing to all mankind. May the Spirit of God preside over us at this time and give unto us a far-seeing and comprehensive vision, a generous and discriminating charity, an earnest and self-forgetting desire to set forward the work of our Lord in this great republic, so that His name may be honored and a great multitude be brought into the Church. May the spirit of our ascended Lord, who died on the cross for the world's salvation, so live in all our members that we may help to hasten the day when a pure faith and a pure life shall be the common possession of all peoples, when Christ shall reign in righteousness from the mountains unto the sea, and from the rivers unto the ends of the earth.

